



OUTLOOK99

YPSILANTI AREA

Officials in Ypsilanti have been laying the groundwork for what they hope will be a boom year for downtown development.
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Augusta Township is attracting the attention of some developers looking to build in rural settings.
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Officials in Sumpter Township are having a hard time keeping up with the pace of growth.
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Change is coming to Whittaker Road in Ypsilanti Township. The trick is to make it look like nothing's changed at all.
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Belleville's leaders hope to have the master plan complete and a cohesive planning process in place this year.
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COMMUNITIES

Ypsilanti primes downtown for takeoff

Officials apply for grants, lobby firms to relocate

By WILL STEWART
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Officials in the city of Ypsilanti spent much of 1998 laying the groundwork for what they hope will be a boom year for downtown development during 1999.

"This isn't something you measure in inches — you measure it in millimeters," said David Potter, director of the Ypsilanti Downtown Development Authority. "We're working on a lot of things and we're making progress."

"But it's going to take an awfully long time."

That hasn't stopped officials from building the foundation upon which they hope to construct the future of downtown Ypsilanti.

That means applying for grants, soliciting potential retail clients to relocate downtown and singing the praises of doing business in Ypsilanti.

"We're laying a lot of the groundwork and getting things in place," said Keith Peters, president of the Ypsilanti Area Chamber of Commerce. "I couldn't be more excited about the future of downtown Ypsilanti."

By far the biggest project in the pipeline is a proposal to redevelop the Water Street area — a decrepit warehouse district — into a commercial-and-residential showcase for the Huron River.

Last year, the city's Master Plan was revamped to create a new, commercial-and-residential zoning designation as the ground work for the Water Street plan. Then, the city's Economic Development Corp. made plans to purchase the Huron Trade Center building as the first piece in the redevelopment puzzle.

In January, the city hired Environmental Consulting and Technologies of Detroit, to administer a \$200,000 pilot grant from the federal Environmental Protection Agency to study pollution at the site. Meanwhile, Hamilton-Anderson and Associates, another Detroit firm, will work with the city to devise a development plan for the project.

"We want to look at what specific uses would be appropriate and what kinds of infrastructure needs are required to help us establish design guidelines," said Jennifer

Goulet, the city's community and economic development director.

The project won't come together overnight, but Goulet said hard work on the front end of the project will eventually pay long-term dividends.

"We're expecting to have the planning process completed before the end of the year," she said.

"Long range, the total completion is certainly something we'd like to see some progress on during the next few years."

The entire project could be completed within five years, she said.

Peters said he believes the Water Street redevelopment will help to pull the two sides of downtown — currently separated by Huron Street — together as a cohesive unit.

"You can't not consider Water Street to be part of downtown," he said. "That's going to be big for the city when it comes together."

Until then, development officials are keeping a lot of irons in the fire.

After repeated setbacks, plans are moving forward to construct a boulevard along Michigan Avenue, between the Huron River and Hamilton Street. The Michigan Department of Transportation has applied for a state grant to pay for the median, which would likely cost about \$350,000.

Officials said the median will slow traffic, making pedestrian crossings safer and allowing motorists to see what downtown Ypsilanti has to offer.

"I think that would make tremendous, tremendous difference," Goulet said. "It would certainly be a very attractive improvement that would signal a sense of arrival downtown."

In addition, the City Council last year approved a plan to spend as much as \$500,000 to restore the facade of City Hall, One S. Huron St., a move Peters said will pay immediate dividends.

"One company came to town and saw (City Hall)

and said that's why they're not moving here," Peters said. "I wish we could have said that we're in the process of restoring that building."

Meanwhile, Peters said he's close to closing on a lease agree-



The Ypsilanti City Council last year approved a plan to spend as much as \$500,000 to restore the facade of City Hall at 1 S. Huron St.

NEWS FILE PHOTO

ment with a "major retailer" for the old Smith Furniture building South Washington Street and said he has seen renewed interest in the Kresge building at the corner of Michigan Avenue and Washington streets.

And Potter said he's in the process of publishing a brochure to distribute to businesses consid-

ering Ypsilanti.

"We need to let people know what we have to offer," he said.

While future plans appear to be shaping up nicely, the present remains somewhat dim.

The only substantial business to open up shop downtown during 1998 was Angel Foods, a catering shop and deli, located in the space

formerly occupied by Max's Deli, at 6 W. Michigan Ave.

"So many positive things are happening," Peters said. "It's just a matter of time before we start to see all of the benefits."

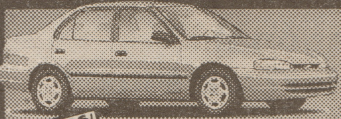
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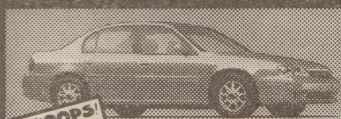
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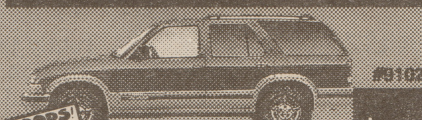


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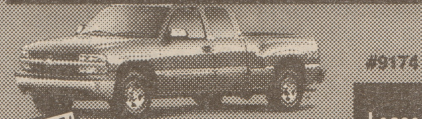


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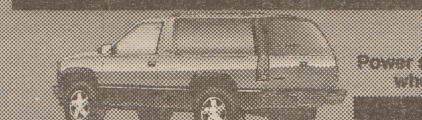


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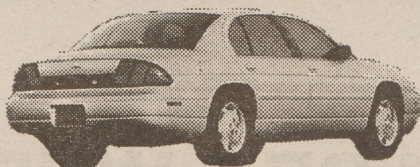
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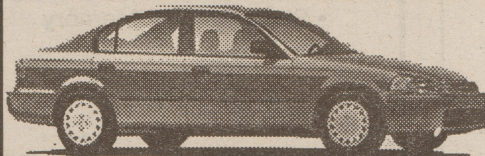


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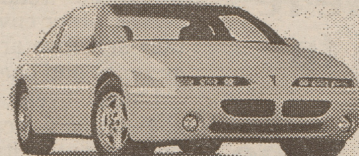


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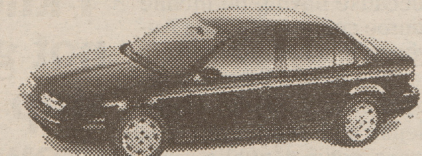


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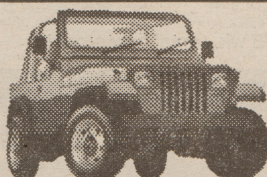


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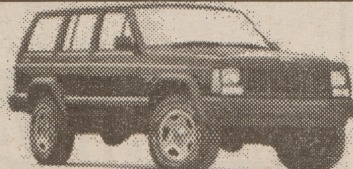


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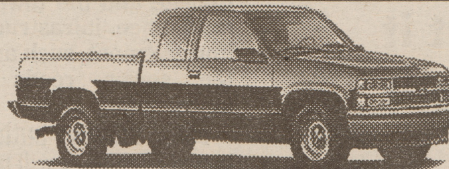


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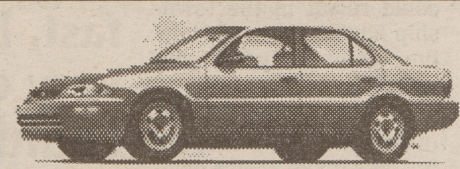


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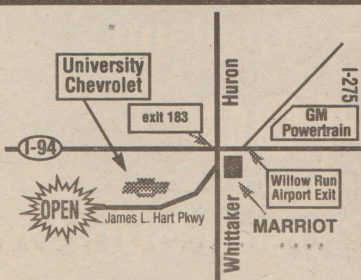
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COMMUNITIES

Augusta Township starts to attract builders' attention

Some residents fear developments will overburden local school system

ANNMARIE SCHULTZ
NEWS SPECIAL WRITER

Still one of the best kept secrets in the county, Augusta Township is attracting the attention of some developers looking to build in rural settings.

The township seemed a favorite last year for developers of mobile home parks. Two developers applied to the township for zoning changes for a mobile home communities. Augusta currently has no mobile home development.

In January, one of the proposed developments made some headway after receiving preliminary approval for the zoning change from the township board. The developer, Medallion Homes, still has other hurdles to leap before breaking ground on the site. The company still must get the necessary permits and approvals from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the Washtenaw County Drain Commission.

The mobile home community, called Augusta Woods, is designed for 399 units, and its plans have been approved by the township Planning Commission. It would be located on a 138-acre parcel at the southwest corner of Rawsonville and Bemis roads.

Although many citizens spoke out against the proposed rezoning during a public hearing, Supervisor Dan Bartok believes giving preliminary approval to the community is in the township's best interest because having no mobile home community puts Augusta in a bad position.

"We have a fiduciary responsibility to do what's legal and right even if it goes against public opinion," Bartok said.

Rejecting the proposal puts the township at risk for a legal battle that could result in the township having no say in how the community is developed.

"If we're going to have (a mobile home community), let's make a wise decision," he said.

A second mobile home developer, who was eyeing a 232-acre site near Whittaker and Bemis roads, has plans for 111 single family homes and 687 manufactured housing units. Right now the second portion of a public hearing on the proposal has been postponed, Clerk Carol Kovalak said.

A third mobile home development, which was approved by a consent judgment in 1995 in Washtenaw Circuit Court, is cur-

rently under review by the Planning Commission. It would include 220 units near Bemis and Whittaker roads.

Controlling the number of units in dense developments, such as in a mobile home community, helps keep the township from growing too fast, Bartok said.

If the two proposed mobile home communities were allowed to have the number of homes being proposed it would have a huge impact on the township's populations, which is currently estimated at around 4,400 people.

Bartok points to the growth in Ypsilanti Township and the impact it's had on Lincoln Schools. He doesn't want to see the same thing happen to Augusta.

"I know we're not going to stop the growth," Bartok said. "I hope it's not going to grow that fast, but it very easily could."

Aside from future changes in housing, the township is also working with Environmental Quality, the owner of an 1,800-acre site once slated by its owners for use as a toxic waste landfill.

Early last year, EQ pulled its application for a landfill permit and began going through the process of rezoning the property as a planned unit development.

The proposed land uses include 989 acres for industrial development, 40 acres for commercial and office development and 279 acres for a golf course.

The remaining acreage would be wetlands preserves, other environmentally sensitive areas, buffer zones and open space.

Late last year, the township set up a local district finance authority to capture 50 percent of increased tax revenues from Washtenaw County, Washtenaw Community College and the township to finance infrastructure improvement, such as water, sewer, roads and landscaping.

Nine finance authority board members will be selected during the next year.

Bartok hopes developers interested in light industry and clean development will be drawn to the site.

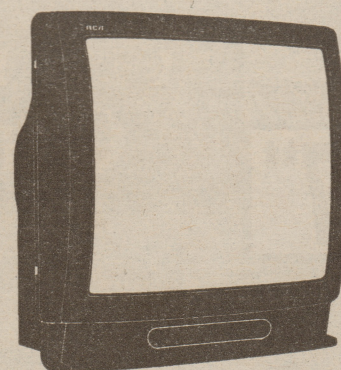
For now, the township is working on determining how to provide the site with sewer and water, he said.

Regardless of the type of development, Kovalak believes the township will strive to keep its country appeal.

'I know we're not going to stop the growth. I hope it's not going to grow that fast, but it very easily could.'

— Dan Bartok,
township supervisor

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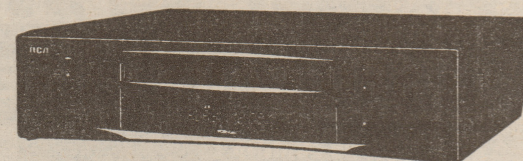


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COMMUNITIES



NEWS FILE PHOTO

NEW THIS YEAR — John Tucker Jr., grandson of automotive entrepreneur Preston Tucker, with some of the memorabilia featured at Tucker Cafe/Esspresso, which opened in June at 44 E. Cross St. After just a few months in business, Tucker is expanding the shop, which will triple its size. Tucker will add breakfast and lunch offerings after the expansion is complete. Preston developed and built Tucker automobiles in the 1940s.

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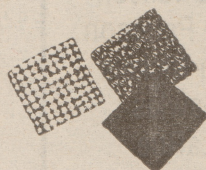
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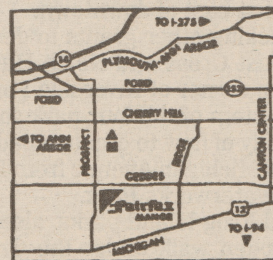
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COMMUNITIES



The boardwalk over the Huron River that connects Frog Island and Riverside Park. Ypsilanti officials plan to link those two parks with Peninsular Park on the north side of the city and Waterworks Park on the south side as part of the overall river corridor plan.

NEWS FILE PHOTO

Officials planning new development for riverfront area

By JOHN MULCAHY
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

One of Ypsilanti's greatest assets — its riverfront on the Huron River — has become the focus of two projects aimed at developing it both as an amenity and as a magnet for business.

Key elements include a plan to give each of four city parks along the river a unique identity — with unique activities — and to clean up and redevelop the Water Street area at the east end of downtown.

In the end, the added amenities will help attract business to Ypsilanti, said Jennifer Goulet, director of community and economic development for the city.

The city has a \$500,000 grant for one of the most dramatic park improvements, the remaking of Frog Island Park. Plans call for dredging the Huron River to turn the park — now a peninsula despite its name — into an island once more.

Other planned improvements include lowering a berm on the park's western edge to make access to the river easier, building a 7,500-person amphitheater in the park and improving sports and recreational facilities there.

Work on the park is expected to begin in the fall of 2000, said Amy McMillan, city parks and recreation director.

Even closer to downtown, the city has ap-

plied for grants to link the Riverside Arts Center, on North Huron Street, to Riverside Park, which is just east of downtown. The city is seeking other grants to develop a plaza at East Cross and North Huron streets (near the corner of Riverside Park), map the path system of the four-park corridor and do a study of how to create a pedestrian link across Michigan Avenue from Riverside Park to Waterworks Park.

Riverside and Frog Island parks, already linked by a wooden walk under the Cross Street bridge, would be further linked to

See RIVER, Page 10

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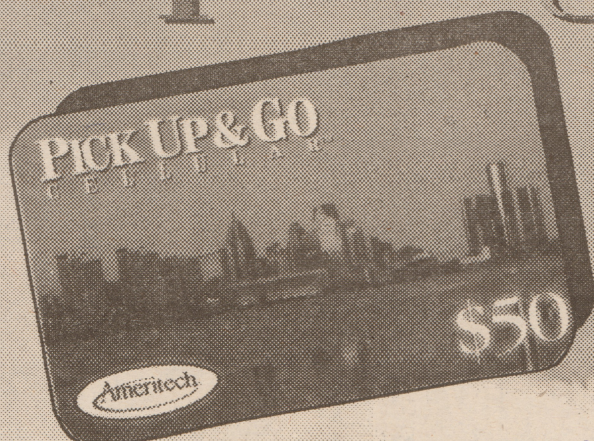
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| June | • Orphan Car Show in Riverside Park |
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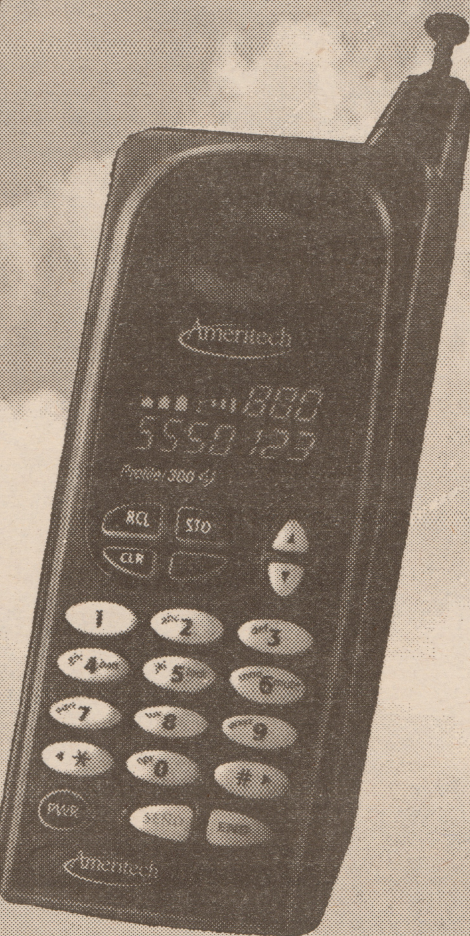
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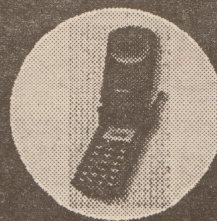
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THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

COMMUNITIES

New DDA director stresses cooperation

Downtown climate improving, if slowly

By WILL STEWART
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Seven months after his arrival in town as Ypsilanti's Downtown Development Authority chief, David Potter is still preaching patience.

Halfway through his one-year, \$30,000 contract with the DDA, Potter said he believes the city is inching toward a long-awaited downtown rebirth, even if the evidence of any such renaissance is hard to see.

Potter arrived in Ypsilanti on the heels of a \$1.2 million streetscape improvement initiative funded by the DDA. His appointment to the DDA coincided with the organization's shift from the streetscape project to a more marketing-oriented approach.

Potter's been there before.

In Saline, where he was development director before making the move to his current job, Potter shepherded a rebirth that he hopes to duplicate in Ypsilanti.

But, as he's quick to remind people, it will take time.

Potter sat down with the News last month and discussed his vision for downtown Ypsilanti. Here are some of the things he had to say.

How would you assess the current state of the business climate in downtown Ypsilanti?

The state of the business climate seems to be improving. Not as fast as a lot of us would like it to, of course, but this is going to take some time.

We're focusing on things for the student population at Eastern Michigan University, because frankly, there haven't been a lot of things to attract students downtown. And that's a big segment of the community. There are more students at EMU than there are Ypsilanti residents. So we're foolish if we don't try to attract those students downtown. They need something to do and we need the foot traffic. We need the spendable dollars.

What is downtown Ypsilanti's niche?

Kind of a mixture of eating and

development because restaurants bring people. We have restaurants, but we need to bring more diversity in the restaurants that we do have. We need dinner theater. Or dance clubs and not just for young people, but for everyone. We need to be a place where people can have dinner and then go dancing. Older people like to dance, too.

People spend a lot of money eating out. There never seem to be enough restaurants. No matter where you go on a Friday or Saturday night, there's a wait. You can go to Ann Arbor, you can go to Dexter, you can go to Chelsea or Saline ... I want it to be like that in Ypsilanti.

When you bring people downtown for that sort of thing, you will develop ancillary businesses. Gift shops. Little art shops and that sort of thing. Bookstores. Things that people will walk by on their way to a restaurant, where they'll stop in and spend some money. That's the direction we have to go.

Is it getting easier to sell this area?

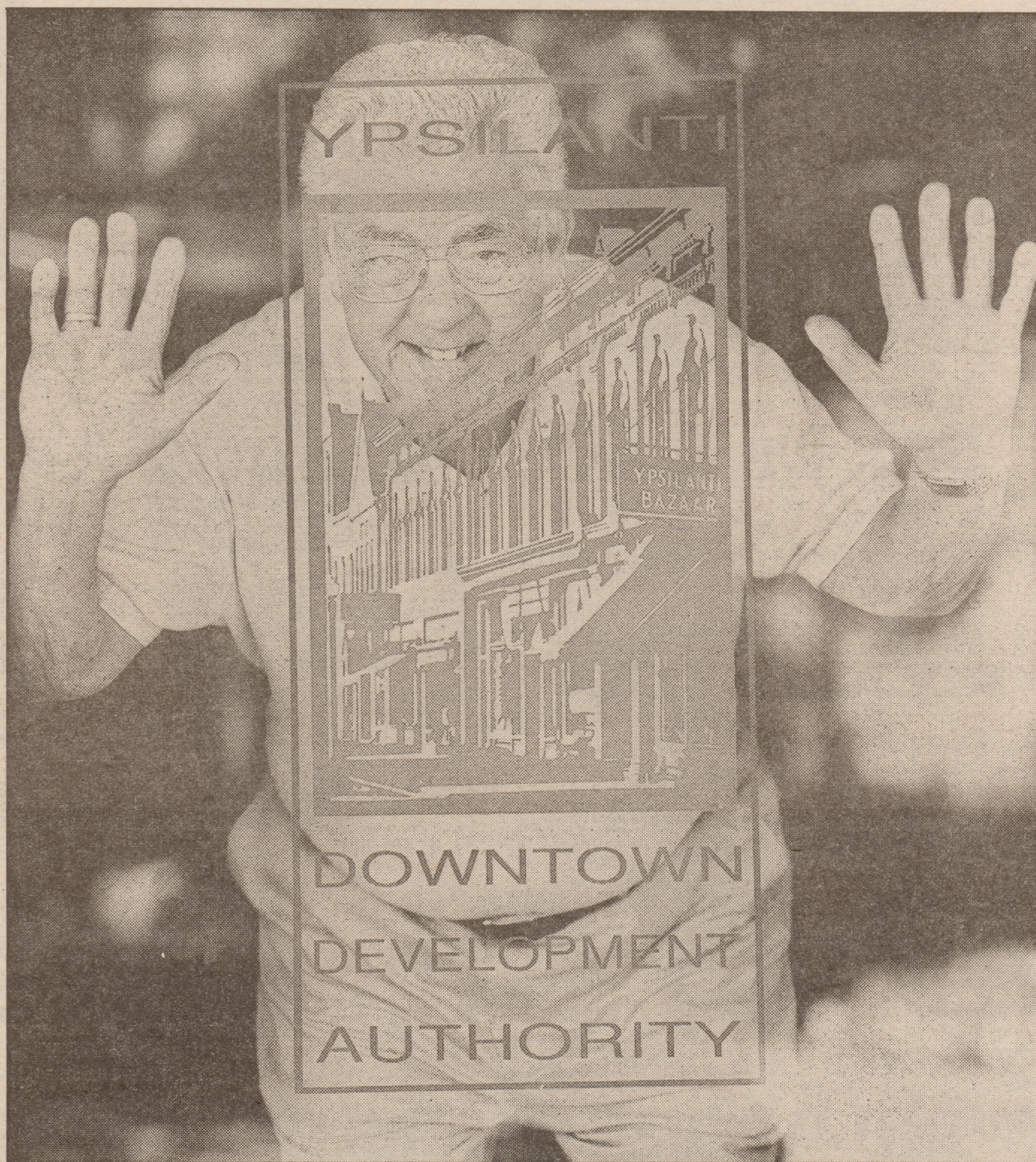
It is to a degree. But it will get easier as we get a flagship store here. When we get one new one, it will really help. I had hoped that we would get an Old Navy store in the old Smith Furniture building and they came and looked, but it didn't work out. But we need some sort of marquee store to open and get the ball rolling.

Once we get something here, it will make a big difference.

At the same time, there are some things that the city is doing that will help. There's a plan to redo the outside of City Hall and that's going to make a major impact. It will help us immeasurably in marketing the downtown area.

Why is this \$500,000 City Hall renovation so important?

Any way you come into the city, you're going to see City Hall. And aesthetically, it looks terrible. The impression that people get is: If the city doesn't care about the way things look, why should they? And they're right, why should they? And the city knows that and that's why they're going to spend a lot of money. It won't be cheap.



NEWS FILE PHOTO

Downtown Development Authority director David Potter says one of his priorities in revitalizing downtown Ypsilanti is attracting more students from Eastern Michigan University. 'There are more students at EMU than there are Ypsilanti residents,' he says, 'so we're foolish if we don't try to attract those students downtown.'

but it's important.

As you talk to businesses and try to get them to consider downtown Ypsilanti, what are you able to point to as selling points?

Ypsilanti is an old area. It's been here a long time and there are some beautiful historical districts and gorgeous Victorian homes. It has one of the oldest universities in the country with a great reputation.

Those are major selling points.

And the drawbacks?

The looks of the downtown. It's just difficult to get other people to upgrade their property when City Hall looks the way it does.

As you look at 1998, what

can you identify as major accomplishments?

I don't know that I've made any major accomplishments, other than getting things organized so that we're doing this as a collaborative effort. There's nothing I can do individually to make this turnaround happen. It's something that has to have the cooperation of the city, the Chamber of Commerce, the university, the DDA ... Collaboratively, we all have to try to turn everybody's thinking around.

And you know, the biggest obstacle is that everybody has heard for so long all of Ypsilanti's troubles that they all have started to believe it. It's an attitude that needs to be changed.

And what's on the agenda

for 1999?

I'd like to get a store or a restaurant into the Kresge building (a vacant storefront at the northwest corner of West Michigan Avenue and Washington Street). We've had some discussions with some different people and I think something will happen. I also want to get something into the Smith Furniture building.

The biggest thing is that I don't want people to get impatient, even though I know they will. It's going to take time and it won't be easy. But that's what's going to happen. Having been through this before, I know this is just something that you have to experience.

But slowly, as you begin to make inroads, things start to slowly feed on itself and bring other things in.

COMMUNITIES

Revenue shortfall stalls sewer line plan in Sumpter Township

By AMALIE NASH
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Houses, businesses and industrial property continue to crop up in Sumpter Township but officials are having a hard time keeping up with the pace of growth.

One reason, Interim Administrator Steve Kunselman said, is because the township has fallen onto hard financial times after losing a primary source of funding.

As a result, a planned second sewer line looks unlikely for several years, along with water main and drain improvements. The staff at the township hall has been slashed back.

"The biggest restriction is the lack of sewer lines," Kunselman said. "We can't have any high density developments. Our zoning says lots need to be one acre minimum in areas without sewer."

One sewer line was installed in the township four years ago and serves a mobile home park, apartment complex, various houses, commercial property and a proposed industrial park.

Revenue from a landfill in the township nearly dried up when two waste hauling companies combined and took the refuse to Van Buren Township. The township had received around \$2.4 million annually; that figure is now below \$1 million.

"A lot of things have been held up because of a lack of revenues," Kunselman said. "I have no idea when we could put another sewer in. We're being sued by a mobile home park six miles from sewer connections to put a sewer in. We don't have the money to do it."

Instead, township officials are attempting to make use of the resources they do have and pattern growth to fit the rural 37-acre township in the southwest corner of Wayne County. The population now hovers at 11,000.

Individual homes are being built at a steady pace and small projects are taking shape, along with a few commercial additions. A new mobile home park is being proposed and another is planning an expansion.

'The biggest restriction is the lack of sewer lines. We can't have any high density developments. Our zoning says lots need to be one acre minimum in areas without sewer.'

— Steve Kunselman,
interim administrator,
Sumpter Township

In 1998, 59 new homes cropped up in Sumpter Township, said Debbie Neville, township building clerk.

A plastics plant is expected to be the first business in a proposed 57-acre industrial park. The plant should generate jobs for 25-30 employees, Kunselman said.

Township officials are attempting to steer residential development to the northwest portion of the township and maintain the southern land as agriculture. More than 1,000 acres in the southeast corner are being set aside as a wetland mitigation project.

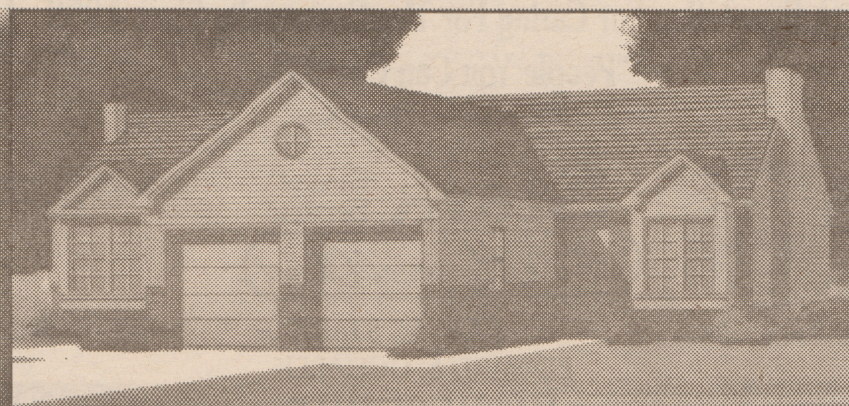
"We're trying to follow our master plan," Kunselman said. "We still have a lot of empty land near the sewer that will fill in. We have a real range of development, a little bit of everything."

This year's budget is currently under review and officials hope to foresee a more stable financial future. Then, it would be time to look into infrastructure improvements, Kunselman said.

"We're growing, but not by tremendous leaps and bounds," Kunselman said. "It's consistent but at this point it's not overwhelming. We're just trying to keep up."

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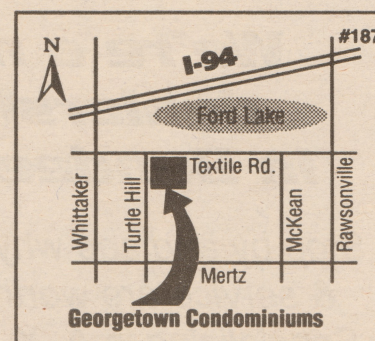
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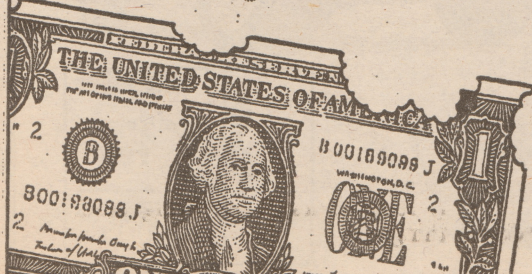
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COMMUNITIES

Continued from 6

RIVER: Development projects work together, complement each other

Peninsular Park on the north side of the city and Waterworks Park on the south side as part of the overall river corridor plan. Ultimately, all would be linked to parks in Ypsilanti Township and Gallup Park in Ann Arbor.

All those improvements should go hand-in-hand with other plans for the Water Street area, bounded by Michigan Avenue on the north, the Huron River on the west and south, and Park Street on the east, Goulet said.

"The two really have to complement one

another and work together," she said.

The Water Street area is the site of abandoned industrial facilities and, most probably, environmental contamination that will have to be addressed before it is redeveloped. The city has a \$200,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to do an environmental assessment of the area and develop an urban design for it, Goulet said.

The city has hired companies for both projects and will sponsor educational forums about the plans in March or April, she said.

"We anticipate getting a pretty quick start on some of the environmental portions," Goulet said. By this fall, the city should also have the urban design, she said.

The area is designated for mixed commercial and residential use in the city's land use master plan, but its ultimate use is still to be determined, Goulet said.

"One thing that the EPA grant can do for us is provide a more detailed picture of what that might look like," Goulet said. All the work under the EPA grant must be done by June 2000, she said.

While the grant work should be done by this fall, Goulet expects it to be three to five years before the public will begin seeing changes in the area.

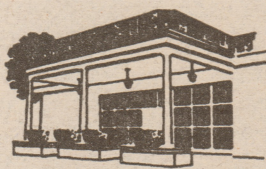
The many improvements already planned to the city's four parks along the river, besides providing recreation for city residents, will be a marketing tool to attract businesses to the Water Street area, Goulet said.

"It will be a great amenity for the development in that area," she said. "That's our basic quality of life factor."

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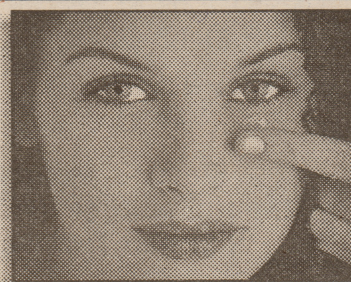
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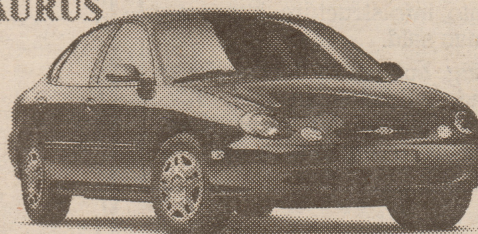
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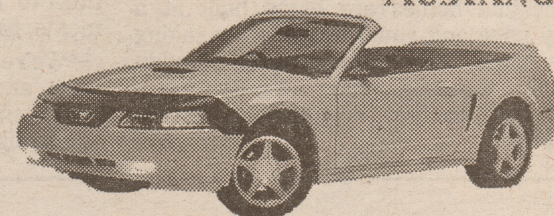
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COMMUNITIES

Van Buren braces for development

By MARJORIE KAUTH-KARJALA
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

VAN BUREN TOWNSHIP — After a six-month moratorium on new development plans that ended March 2, the township expects to be more ready to manage the residential, commercial and industrial growth that it knows is coming.

Van Buren Township enacted the moratorium last summer while it reworks its master plan and ordinance review process. Although neither of these have had final approval from the township Board of Trustees, they are moving toward completion, said Bryce Kelley, township developmental services director.

"We are doing the final bits and pieces," and will probably ask for approval from the township board at the end of April or early May, Kelley said.

The changes include a requirement for two-acre lot sizes for residential developments in areas in the southern half of the township. The two-acre category will join the one-acre lot size already in place in much of the southwest portion of the township.

Another change to residential development is the establishment of a planned residential development ordinance. This allows developers to trade lot size for open space. In the zoning areas requiring one- or two-

For years, the township was passed by for residential development, while Canton Township, just north of Van Buren, sprouted houses like mushrooms. But now, residential development has come to Van Buren, with seven or eight new subdivisions started in 1998 and more expected.

acre lots, the lots could be smaller if the developer leaves some land undeveloped.

The undeveloped land could be used for a golf course, water park or other private recreation area, Kelley said.

"To encourage a developer to leave a lot of land untouched is difficult," Kelley said. Allowing a profit-making use of the land, such as a golf course, makes it a little easier, he said.

Other changes in residential ordinances

include architectural standards that call for a minimum percentage of brick on new homes, as well as variations in building style throughout a development.

For Supervisor Helen Foster, the hard work of the planning commission will pay off as development pressures increase in the township.

"Their actions have been historic. . . . The timing and the thoroughness of what's been under consideration is absolutely historic,"

Foster said.

For years, the township was passed by for residential development, while Canton Township, just north of Van Buren, sprouted houses like mushrooms. But now, residential development has come to Van Buren, with seven or eight new subdivisions started in 1998 and more expected.

The township learned from Canton's development, which in some cases has been very dense, Foster said. The estate-size lot requirements as well as the planned residential development ordinance will create a variety in residential development and maintain open space, she said.

Also, the township is in the process of passing a zoning ordinance to regulate "big-box" industrial development. "Big-box" is a term for a large building that is leased to several smaller industrial businesses. The ordinance for the big-box form of development is to deal with an emerging trend in industry, Foster said.

Past zoning ordinances have already established standards and areas for industrial development, particularly in the Haggerty Road corridor.

The township has long had a philosophy of encouraging commercial, industrial and residential development to create a balanced community. The industrial development took off first and now residential is sprouting.

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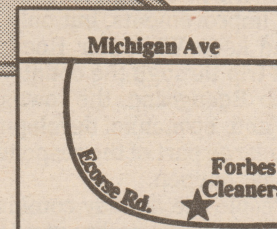
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COMMUNITIES



NEWS FILE PHOTO

A continuing wave of new housing, such as the Raymond Meadows subdivision, has contributed to increasingly congested roads in Ypsilanti Township.

BATTLING FOR BALANCE

Ypsilanti Township weighs directing growth, preserving charm of Whittaker Road

By IRVIN L. JACKSON
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Change is coming to Whittaker Road in Ypsilanti Township.

A library, drug store and other neighborhood stores, an expanded industrial park and possibly even a large recreation center are all targeted at the tree-lined north-south thoroughfare through the southern part of the township.

Now, the trick for Ypsilanti Township officials is to make it look like nothing's changed at all.

"It's always been the direction of the board that the character and quality of life in that area would be on a higher level than on, say, Ecorse Road or Washtenaw Avenue," said Karen Lovejoy Roe, Ypsilanti Township supervisor.

Township officials want the libraries, recreation centers, grocery stores and even road improvements, but only if they can do it and keep Whittaker Road a rural, tree-lined trip through the countryside.

Bob Beaugrand, the township's community and economic development director, has a large part of the responsibility of making that happen.

"People are already coming. There are a number of high-quality residential developments that are already coming," Beaugrand said. "The corridor was planned and designed to service people down there."

In the next four to five years, the township could see an influx of as many as 5,000 more new residents, which would push the population over the 50,000 mark. The vast majority of those people would be moving

into the southern part of Ypsilanti Township where numerous new developments and subdivisions are going up.

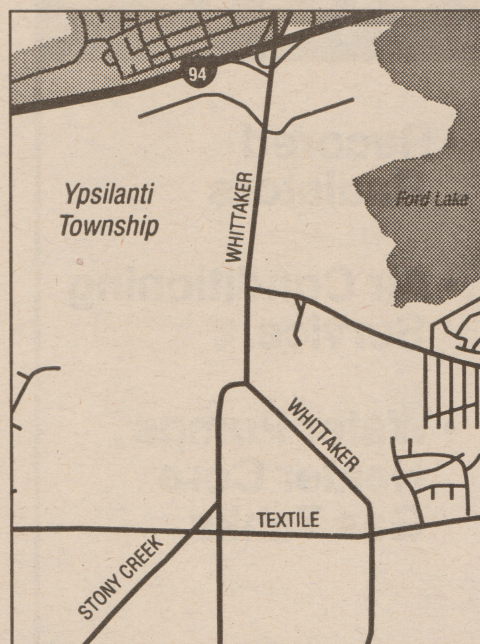
One such subdivision, Paint Creek Crossings, is the largest development to hit the township in at least a decade. At more than 130 acres, it would include apartments, homes and duplexes located on the west side of Whittaker Road between South Huron River Drive and Stony Creek Road. Along Whittaker Road, the development would sport a row of commercial businesses anchored by an Arbor CVS drug store.

Township officials are working with the architects of the development to make sure the stores blend well with the character of Whittaker Road, Roe said.

"That is not a strip mall — we are really trying to get them to incorporate it into the housing (in the area)," Roe said. "Our plan is that it is going to be highly upgraded, upscale shopping area."

The Ypsilanti District Library also is preparing to build its new headquarters off Whittaker Road, just south of Huron River Drive and the Ypsilanti Township Civic Center. It will be a 55,000-foot facility accessible from Whittaker Road. And the township is looking at a proposed recreation center in the same area. Combine that with the recent approval to expand by another 116 acres the Huron Center Commercial and Industrial Park, just south of I-94 on the west side of Whittaker Road, and you have a lot happening along Whittaker Road.

"I personally am not in favor of seeing a lot of development on Whittaker," said William Gagnon, a township board trustee. "I'd like to maintain the rural character wherev-



NEWS MAP

In a 1997 study, Whittaker Road south of Stony Creek had a daily traffic count of about 8,000 cars, up from 6,200 cars in 1993.

er possible."

A highly commercial Whittaker Road is not what township residents are looking for, he said. They have that on nearby Rawsonville Road already.

"I don't think that is the quality of life people were looking for when they came out here," Roe said. "Some on the board have

said that we do not need another Washtenaw Avenue. Plus, there is a concern about how much can you inundate a community."

Coming projects certainly mean more more traffic. The township already has been pressed by residents to handle the increasing traffic along Whittaker Road.

In a study by the road commission done in 1997, Whittaker Road south of Stony Creek had a daily traffic count of about 8,000 cars. That is up from 6,200 cars in the same area in 1993. Also, Whittaker Road south of Textile had a 6,500 car traffic count in 1996, up from 4,600 in 1993.

"We're looking at making strategic traffic improvements to alleviate those conditions," said Beaugrand. "We've got a number of intersections that need signaled improvements."

One novel approach to control additional traffic in the area is a proposed turnaround at Whittaker Road and Stony Creek. Used often in Europe, the turnaround would be a circular island at the intersection which would encourage traffic to flow around the circle, lifting the stop-and-go feeling of an intersection governed by stop signs.

The concept was brought forward by architects of the Paint Creek Crossings project.

Beaugrand said the township has applied for a grant to fund further traffic improvements in the area.

"There is no question that there is a need for a lot of road improvements all over on the south side," Roe said. "But there is also a real need to do road improvements on the north side. There is no money to do it."

COMMUNITIES

Bulldozers work on a wetland project along Prospect Road near Geddes in Superior Township. Officials are working to preserve as much land as possible in the face of increasing development pressure.

NEWS FILE PHOTO



Superior Township studies sewer capacity

Superior Township developments

Major projects currently under review in Superior Township. Some have received the go-ahead, and others are in the preliminary stages.

■ **Brookside:** 374 homes on 138 acres, south of Geddes Road.

■ **Prospect Pointe:** 375 homes on 169 acres, south of Geddes Road.

■ **Fairway Glens:** Up to 400 homes on 46 acres, between Stamford and Wiard roads.

■ **Arborview Estates:** 25 homes on 48 acres, north of Plymouth Road.

■ **Glenborough:** 160 homes on 350 acres, between Cherry Hill and Ford roads.

■ **Grancare:** 120-bed nursing home in 59,000-square-foot facility on 18 acres, south of Geddes Road.

Smaller projects under way include: Blue Heron Ponds at Ford and Prospect; Timberwood Estates off Frain's Lake Road; and Hunters Creek Equestrian Estates on the north side of Geddes Road east of LeForge.

■ Projects on hold until officials sure system can handle growth.

By AMALIE NASH
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Superior Township may experience even more of an influx of growth once officials can determine just how much the township sewer system can handle.

Currently, three large projects remain on the back burner while engineers hired by the township continue to study sewer capacity. Township officials determined last year that it was time to stop approving developments in the southern part of the township until the sewer study was complete although an official moratorium on development has not been declared.

"The township decided existing residents should not have to pay for sewer improvements so developers will pay an equitable portion," Township Clerk Colleen O'Neal said. "Developers can continue to submit plans, but the approvals are contingent on the sewer study."

Meters recently have been installed in the sewers and will be in place for nine months to monitor its capacity, O'Neal said. Once that is finished, any repairs or improvements necessary will begin.

"We need to make sure the system can handle the growth," Supervisor William McFarland said. "I think we're experiencing increased pressure (to grow) because of the growth in our neighboring communities. Our land is more desirable."

The 36-square-mile township is divided into a north section with no sewer lines and a south portion with water and sewer. As a result, growth varies greatly between the two areas.

"We have a huge range of housing in the township from mobile homes to more urban development," said Lynda Oswald, chair of the township Planning Commission. "We also have a huge range of zoning and our role is to make sure proposals conform with the master plan. Development here, in large part, is driven by the conditions of the ground."

Interest in both sections of the township has risen in the past few years, McFarland said. But the township still retains a fair amount of open land and the population is hovering around 10,000.

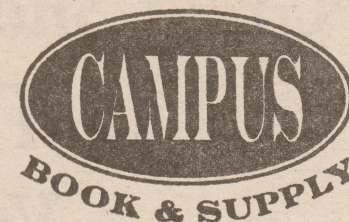
"In the last few years we've had a few large projects come in," McFarland said. "Several are being proposed now and will probably go in once the issues with the sewer are resolved."

O'Neal said she began to notice strong pressures to grow a few years ago, when a developer told her all the adjacent communities were built up and it was Superior Township's turn.

"It's increased in the last couple of years," O'Neal said. "We spent a long time working with our growth management plan and we're following that. We're very serious about enforcing it and reviewing plans carefully to make sure they conform."

While the township grapples with growth pressures, officials are working to preserve as much land as possible before it's lost. The township owns a 160-acre preserve, another 32-acre parcel, and the Superior Land Conservancy has 160 acres.

"We're always looking for cooperative partnerships to set aside some land," O'Neal said. "We're trying to retain some of the special features in the township. We can be overwhelmed (by growth) at times, but we're trying to make sure none of it has a negative impact on our community."

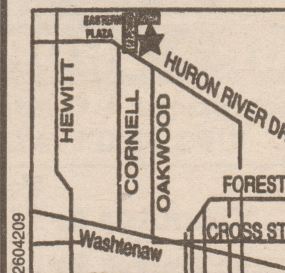


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COMMUNITIES



NEWS FILE PHOTO

Housing development around Belleville Lake, along with neighboring Van Buren and Sumpter townships, has led to increased traffic through Belleville.

Belleville adjusts zoning to reflect '2020 vision'

■ City is updating master plan to make site plan review process more cohesive, study traffic flow issues.

By MARJORIE KAUTH-KARJALA
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

It's great to have a vision for what downtown Belleville could look like by the year 2020, but turning vision into reality involves the time-consuming effort of making sure zoning ordinances and procedures reflect that vision.

The vision for the city was developed in 1997 and 1998 with visioning sessions called Belleville 2020. Since then the city Planning Commission has been enacting ordinances and putting a new master plan in place, said Bob Baker, commission chairman.

In 1999, the city hopes to have the master plan complete and a cohesive planning process that allows for site plan review by the Planning Commission, Baker said.

Previously, commercial projects were sometimes approved by the city's building department without approval by the Planning Commission, Baker said.

Now, a new ordinance will require site plan approval for almost any commercial project. That ordinance is in the approval

process and may be adopted by March 1, Baker said.

"It's an integral part of the implementation of the master plan," Baker said. One of the features desired for downtown is putting sidewalks as close to new businesses as possible so downtown will be more pedestrian-friendly.

The city's master plan is also being updated. That process began last year and will take several more months, Baker said.

The master plan development includes a planned traffic study and discussion of making changes to Main Street to slow down traffic. But any decision on that would take into consideration concerns from Sumpter and Van Buren townships, Baker said. The two townships surround Belleville and are poised for residential growth. Belleville's Main Street is the main route to I-94 for residents who live south of Belleville Lake.

"We would be incorporating our neighbors to the north and south," Baker said.

Other master plan considerations are possibly establishing a planned unit development for the corner of North Liberty Street and Belleville Road, commonly known as the Doane site, Baker said. A PUD would allow a mix of uses for the area, including commercial and residential.

The development of the Doane site and its hoped infusion of life to downtown has been slow. The old building was torn down

in 1993. But despite the slow movement, there are changes in downtown.

Only one of three restaurants slated to open last year has actually opened. Dude's Billiards on Main Street, a pool hall and restaurant opened early in 1998.

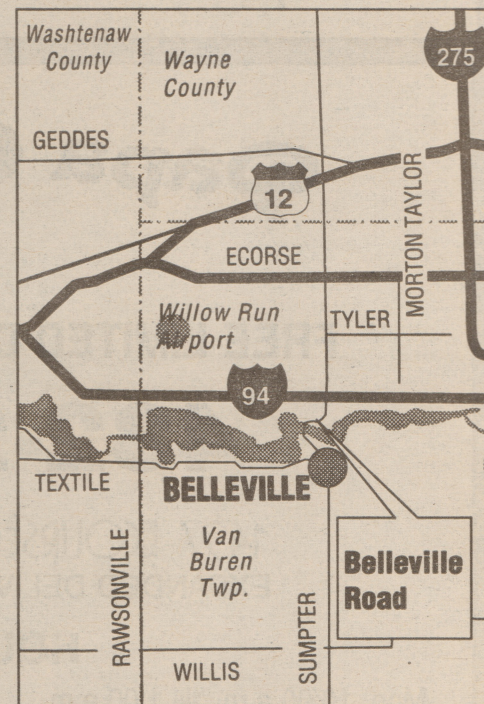
But the Belleville Grill is coming along, said Keith Boc, Belleville public works director. "Mike's should be open in the next couple of weeks," Boc said. Mike Nuculaj, owner of Dimitri's Country Kitchen in Van Buren Township, also owns Belleville Grill.

The third restaurant, at 404 Main St., seems to be moving more slowly, Boc said. The proposed restaurant is to have a New Orleans theme.

Encouraging residential development downtown is an important part of establishing a vital downtown because there would be more pedestrian traffic, Baker said. Currently, ordinances restrict housing above businesses to store owners or managers. The PUD would allow that mix, Baker said.

The ordinance review is necessary to help businesses thrive, he said. Although many businesses are surviving downtown, the important thing is they grow. "If a business doesn't grow, it dies. There's no such thing as stagnant or level," Baker said.

Marjorie Kauth-Karjala covers the Belleville area for the Ypsi Press Edition. Call her at 482-2961.



NEWS FILE MAP

Belleville Road (Main Street in town) is the main route to I-94 for residents in the area.

COMMUNITIES

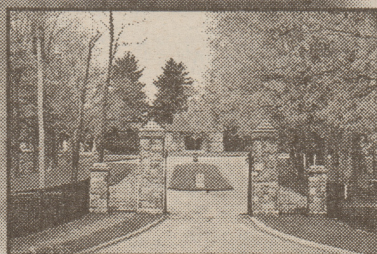


NEWS FILE PHOTO

FLEA MARKET UPGRADES — Customers browse through the Ypsilanti Flea Market. Owner and manager James White has made a series of improvements to the market, located at 210 E. Michigan Ave. White had new bathrooms installed, repaved the parking lot, installed new air conditioning and put in a new kitchen. He also opened a 10,000-square-foot expo hall which has hosted antiques and collectibles shows. The market draws an average of 2,000 people daily on weekends, with up to 237 vendors.

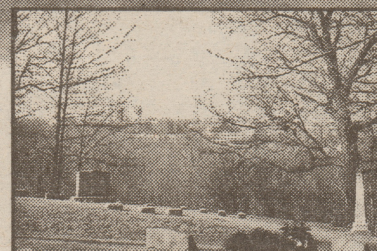
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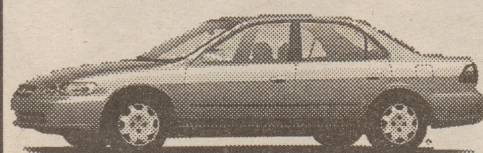
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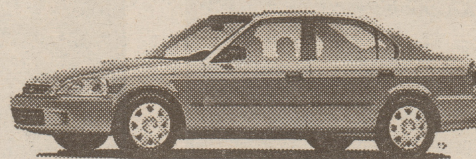
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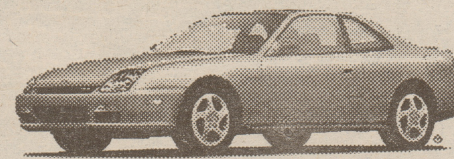
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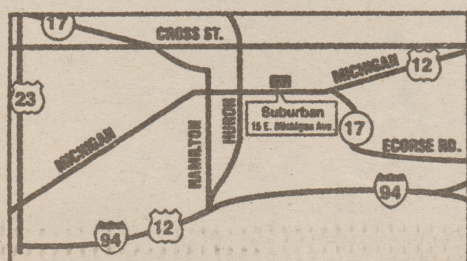
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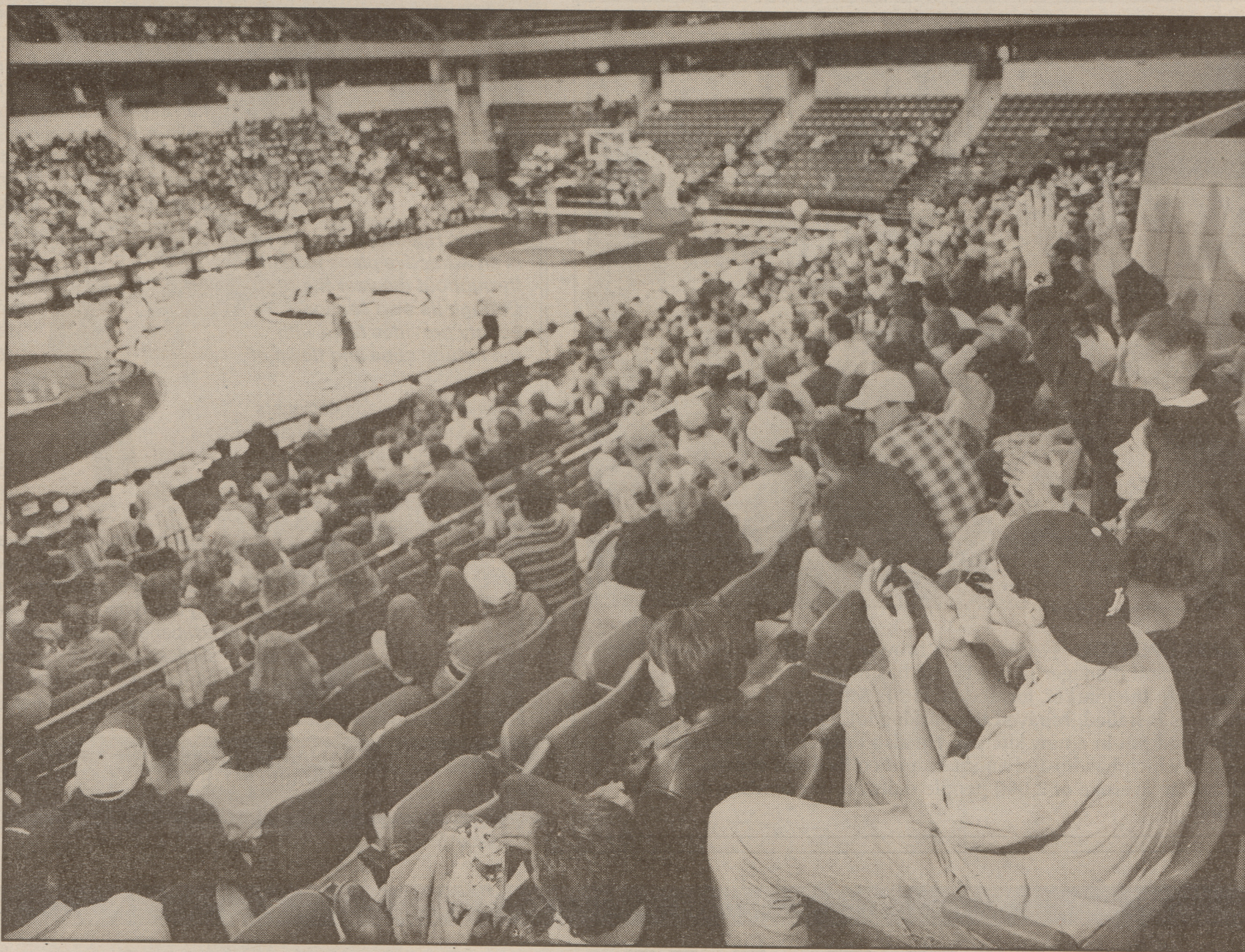
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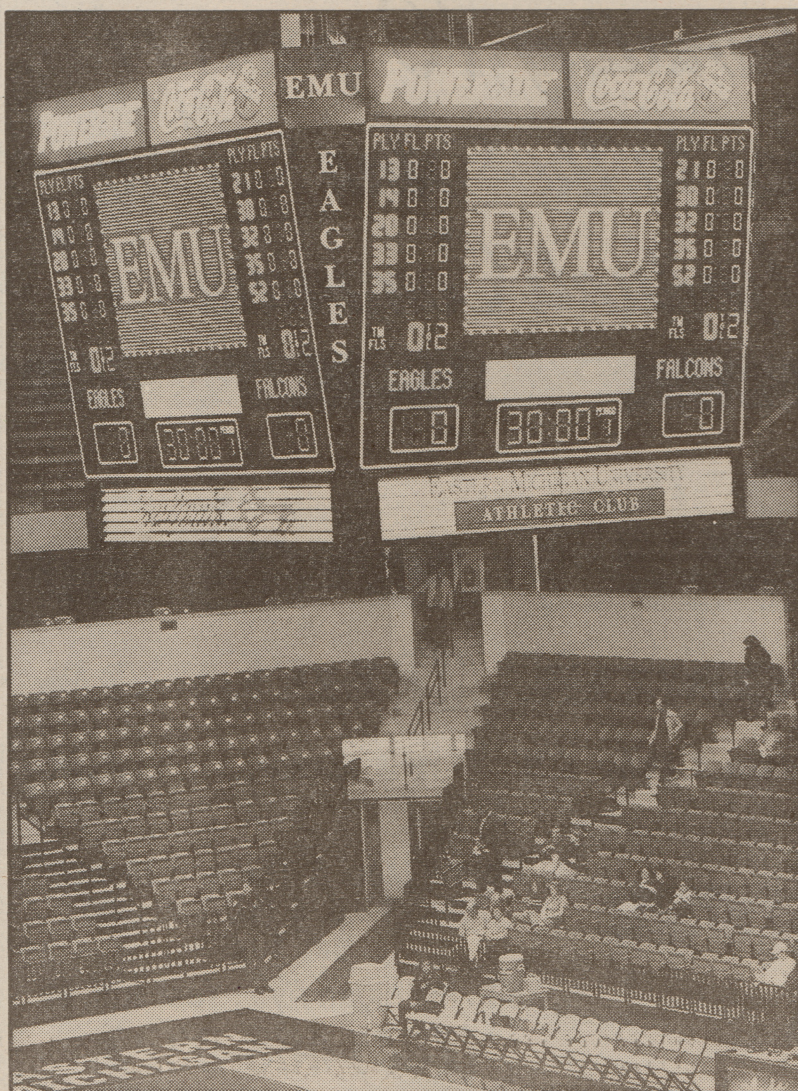
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COMMUNITIES



NEWS FILE PHOTOS

Eastern Michigan University's big wave of construction over the past year included the new Convocation Center, which opened in December. The arena complex boasts state-of-the-art lighting, acoustics and seating. Above, fans attend an EMU basketball game at the center. At left, the center's \$500,000 scoreboard, featuring color video screens. Below, basketball fans line up to buy snacks at one of the center's seven concession stands.



COMMUNITIES



NEWS FILE PHOTO

Bruce T. Halle, right, gets a tour of EMU's new library named in his honor from Morell Boone, dean of learning resources and technologies, during the library's dedication in October. Halle, an EMU graduate, is chairman and CEO of Discount Tire Co. Inc.

State funds helping to modernize EMU's campus

By KAREN JOSEPH
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

If you graduated from Eastern Michigan University in the early to mid-1990s, chances are you'd feel a bit slighted if you returned for a visit this year.

After all, the new, state-of-art \$41 million library wasn't around when you were looking for materials for that term paper on Nietzsche. And the striking new \$29.6 million basketball arena and convocation center came after your time. The greenhouse you remember wasn't a \$945,000 terrestrial and aquatic ecology research center with the latest technology, but a crowded, little room with leaks and drafts.

If you find yourself annoyed by the bells and whistles that weren't part of the university landscape when you were at Eastern, do yourself this favor: Don't come back a year from now.

It'll only get worse.

By then, a new \$15 million academic building for the College of Health and Human Services will be under construction. The cramped, outdated library you remember will have undergone \$14 million in renovations and will have been transformed into

'It used to be that you could go away for a decade or more and not much would change.'

— EMU President William Shelton

an attractive classroom building for the College of Education.

Boone Hall, which you remember as the outmoded home for the College of Education, already is being cleared out for the \$5 million renovation project planned for this summer. When completed, it will house much of the university's continuing education programs.

And there are other things that won't be "just as you remember them."

Goodison Hall, where you spent all of your free time in saving the world with your various student organizations, for example, isn't anywhere to be found.

The building was razed last year to make room for the College of Health and Human Services building. The last bits of rubble were hauled away in December.

And university officials are hoping for even more changes.

nology. The 200,000-square-foot building would house instruction space, laboratories and a research unit.

The final request calls for \$32.7 million for renovations of the 30-year-old Pray-Harold classroom building. The proposal includes cosmetic upgrades, replacement of internal systems, the addition of technology and a constructed link to the new College of Education building. Pray-Harold is the campus' largest academic building.

The Legislature could fund some of the projects, or could reject them altogether.

"With the new Legislature, it's anybody's guess in terms of what we might expect," Shelton said.

Doyle credits the Legislature for much of the building boom at Eastern. All of the projects — except the greenhouse, which was built with grants, and the convocation center, which is funded by student fees, — have been state-funded.

"I don't think I've seen that much at one time. It was pretty amazing," Doyle said. "We have been very fortunate. Both the library and health and human services building were out of the capital bills. Whether or not lightning will strike a third time in this short of time remains to be seen."

"It used to be that you could go away for a decade or more and not much would change," said EMU President William Shelton.

Last year, university officials requested state dollars for the three building projects.

They listed a \$75 million science complex as the top priority for the Ypsilanti campus. The project would include major renovations for the Mark Jefferson science facility, partial demolition of Strong Hall, and an addition of about 160,000 square feet of laboratory and classroom space.

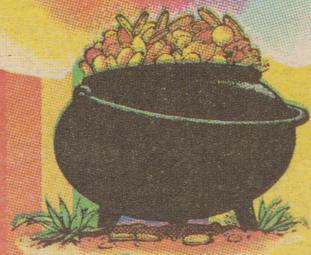
It was the third time the university requested funds for a new science facility. The request has been denied twice.

"It remains our top priority," said Pat Doyle, EMU's vice president for business and finance.

Its second priority request calls for a new, \$52 million building for the College of Tech-

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